



MEMORANDUM

February 22, 2002

File No. 02-022201

TO: All interested parties

FROM: Jenifer Gitchell, SEPA Center

SUBJECT: **SEPA LEAD AGENCY & DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE (DS)
AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS**

This is to advise you that pursuant to WAC 197-11-900 (922 through 948), the Department of Natural Resources has determined that it is Lead Agency for the following:

This proposal will result in the recalculation of a sustainable harvest level for trust forest lands managed by Washington Department of Natural Resources located in western Washington. This proposal will also include a review and possible amendment of the policies in the Forest Resource Plan that affect the proposed Westside sustainable harvest calculation.

Please notify us immediately if you do not concur with this Lead Agency determination.

Attached is a Determination of Significance pertaining to this proposal. Pursuant to WAC 332-41-504, this proposal was filed in the department's SEPA Center at the Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, P.O. Box 47015, Olympia, Washington, on February 22, 2002. We will consider comments on this proposed DS received by 5:00 p.m. on April 10, 2002. **Comments should be submitted to the SEPA Center, at P.O. Box 47015, Olympia, Washington 98504-7015 for distribution to the responsible official. You may also email your comments to: jenifer.gitchell@wadnr.gov. Please include the file number listed above on all comments.**

Attachments

jg

cc: Jack Hulsey, Regions Operations Manager
John Baarspul, Division Manager Land Management Division
Angus Brodie, Assistant Division Manager Land Management Division
Dave Dietzman, Rules Coordinator Asset Management and Protection Division



DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS

Description of Proposal:

This notice advises the public that the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) intends to gather information necessary for the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). This proposal will result in the recalculation of a sustainable timber harvest level for trust forest lands managed by WADNR located in western Washington. This proposal will also include a review and possible amendment of the policies in the Forest Resource Plan that affect the proposed Westside sustainable harvest calculation.

The purpose of the proposal is two-fold:

1. To incorporate new information into a new model to recalculate the sustainable timber harvest level.
2. To analyze and recalculate a sustainable timber harvest level, to be approved by the Board of Natural Resources (BNR).

The need for the proposal is for:

1. State law (RCW 79.68.040) requires the Department to periodically adjust the acreages designated for inclusion in the sustained yield management program and calculate a sustainable harvest level.

Background Information:

The WADNR has unique obligations in managing lands for the state of Washington. With the state of Washington as the trustee, the legislature has designated WADNR as manager of federal grant, Forest Board trust lands and other lands. The state acquired federal grant lands under the Enabling Act and State Constitution when Washington became a state in 1889. Forest Board lands have been acquired over time with tax foreclosures and tax delinquencies, as well as through purchases and gifts or other sources.

WADNR manages approximately 1.4 million acres of timberland in western Washington. The department has a legal duty to produce long-term income for various specific entities, primarily schools and counties, which are trust beneficiaries. It does so in part by using best forest management practice principles. State law (RCW 76.68.040) directs WADNR to apply "sustained yield" management of state-owned forest lands. As a result, the department calculates timber harvest schedules with the goal of producing relative even-flow harvest volumes over a 200-year period after considering multiple economic, social, and environmental objectives (Forest Resource Plan).

The BNR is the department's policy-making body and is composed of six members: the Commissioner of Public Lands; the Governor (or a designated representative); the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Dean of the College of Agriculture, Washington State University; the Dean of the College of Forest Resources, University of Washington; and an elected representative from a county that contains Forest Board land.

Description of the Project:

Complex mathematical simulation models, requiring data and assumptions, are used to derive a sustainable harvest level. WADNR's current project uses a commercially available spatial explicit simulation model: OPTIONS® developed by D.R. Systems.

The data and assumptions are important components of the model, as they describe the real-world system being modeled. The current project includes the following types of geographical information system (GIS) data: forest inventory from WADNR Forest Resource Inventory System (FRIS) that has been modeled to 2002 and updated for management activities; spatial data on streams, rivers and other water bodies from WADNR Forest Practices; spatial data on roads, topography, soil types and stability; spatial data relating to wildlife species; and spatial data relating to administrative units, etc. In total there are approximately 30 GIS data layers used in the model.

The modeling assumptions can be described in two general areas: policy modeling assumptions and forest management strategy modeling assumptions.

Policy modeling assumptions often require the interpretation of federal and state law and DNR policies into variables that can be included in the model. The current policy modeling assumptions can be described in six broad areas, each of which determine the global nature of the model:

Policy modeling assumptions

1. Land Classification (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 3)
2. Sustainable Even-flow Timber Harvest (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 4)
3. Harvest based on Volume (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 5)
4. Ownership Groups (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 6)
5. Resource Conservation (Forest Resource Plan, Policies 13, 14, 15, 22 and 1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
6. Rotation Age (described in Forest Resource Plan, Policy 4)

Forest management strategy modeling assumptions guide the growing, treating, reserving and harvesting of individual stands in the forest inventory data. WADNR's current project uses an established growth and yield model: Stand Projection System (SPS version 4.1¹).

Other forest management strategy assumptions are developed to reach specific policy goals and meet federal and state law. These assumptions include: assumptions on mistyped and un-typed streams; forest harvest rules for riparian areas, unstable slopes,

¹ SPS is a growth and yield computer model of Mason, Bruce and Girard, Inc.

and nesting, roosting, foraging areas, etc. The list below summarizes the key forest management strategy assumptions into 14 groups:

Forest management strategy modeling assumptions

1. Silvicultural Regimes (Forest Resource Plan, Policies 30, 31, 33, 34)
2. Green-up of Harvest (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 32)
3. Riparian/Wetland Protection (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
4. Unstable Slope Protection (Forest Practices Act, WAC 222)
5. Wildlife Reserve Trees (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
6. NRF and Dispersal (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
7. Interim Owl Circles (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
8. Marbled Murrelet (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
9. T&E Species (1997 Habitat Conservation Plan)
10. Late Seral Habitat (Forest Resource Plan, Policies 6, 11, 13, 14, 15)
11. Local Issues (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 16, 19, 24, 29)
12. Visual Areas (Forest Resource Plan, Policy 31)
13. Lake Whatcom Landscape (Bill No. E2SSB 6731)
14. Urban and Transition Lands (Forest Resource Plan, Policies 3, 11)

Provided at the website <http://www.wa.gov/dnr> is a comprehensive list of the current modeling assumptions, including details about the individual assumptions.

Proponent:

Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Location of proposal:

All state trust forested lands west of the Cascade ridge in the state of Washington

Lead Agency: Washington State Department of Natural Resources

EIS Required:

The Lead Agency recognizes the potential for changes to Forest Resource Plan policies and the setting of a sustainable timber harvest level covering DNR-managed trust forest lands in western Washington to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Although it has not been concluded that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required by RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c), an EIS will be prepared to analyze the adverse impacts of this proposal.

Scoping Notice Invites Comments:

This notice is being furnished consistent with SEPA rules (WAC 197-11-408) to obtain suggestions and information on the scope of environmental issues to be addressed in the EIS. The purpose of scoping is to narrow the focus of the EIS to a discussion of probable significant adverse impacts of the proposals, to identify reasonable alternatives that meet the goals identified by the BNR, to suggest potential mitigation measures, and to eliminate from detailed study those impacts that are not significant.

Though this scoping notice, the BNR and WADNR are seeking input from key stakeholders and the public at large on the development of reasonable modeling alternatives that consists of different policy and forest management strategy positions. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required.

The Lead Agency Has Identified the Following for Discussion in the EIS:

The following alternatives have been identified by the BNR for consideration. The EIS will analyze the no action alternative and other reasonable alternatives (to be identified as a result of scoping) that could feasibly attain or approximate the BNR's goals at a lower environmental cost or decreased level of environmental impact.

Alternatives to be considered in the EIS must meet the following given parameters, as provided by the BNR (BNR meeting January 2, 2002):

1. WADNR's Trust Mandate
2. All current federal and state Statutes and Laws
3. The objectives of the 1997 Habitat Conservation Plan

The EIS will examine the BNR-approved policy alternatives as modeling scenarios. The EIS will not assess the environmental impacts associated with the harvest of timber on any specific site, rather this programmatic EIS will assess the general impacts associated with the sustainable harvest level. The EIS will use the sustainable harvest level and associated "draft" modeled harvest schedules to examine likely environmental impacts at specific spatial scales, i.e., landscape, WRIA, or Watershed Administrative Unit (WAU).

Development of Alternative Modeling Scenarios

One of the stated objectives of this proposal is for the BNR to examine different policy alternatives to those stated in the Forest Resource Plan. For the purposes of the EIS, the BNR will determine what will constitute the reasonable alternatives to be modeled. Due to the complexity of this process, the WADNR has provided four initial scenarios to the BNR and the public to facilitate and initiate the development of reasonable alternatives. The four initial scenarios, listed below, are designed for illustration and dialogue purposes within the scoping process. The initial scenarios have not been designed to be considered as the "*reasonable alternatives*" for the EIS. The four scenarios are:

1. Less Habitat Complexity, Passive Stewardship
2. Less Habitat Complexity, Active Stewardship
3. More Habitat Complexity, Passive Stewardship
4. More Habitat Complexity, Active Stewardship

These four initial scenarios will be used during the scoping process as illustrative examples of how policy goals change modeling assumptions. Members of the public are invited to comment on the four initial scenarios, on the modeling assumptions and policy goals that will be considered by the BNR in identifying the range of reasonable alternatives for the analysis in the EIS.

Information relating to the detail of the suite of assumptions that are included in the four proposals provided by WADNR are available on the website at <http://www.wa.gov/dnr> or copies are available from the Washington Department of Natural Resources, SEPA Center, P.O. Box 47015, Olympia, Washington 98504-7015.

Due Date for Scoping Comments:

All comments on the proposal must be received in writing (via mail, fax or e-mail) and must be received by the contact person by 5 p.m. on Wednesday April 10, 2002.

SEPA Contact Person: Jenifer Gitchell
Address: SEPA Center
Washington Department of Natural Resources
1111 Washington Street SE
P.O. Box 47015
Olympia, WA 98504-7015
Phone: (360) 902-1634
Fax: (360) 902-1759
Email: jenifer.gitchell@wadnr.gov

Public Meetings: Public Scoping meetings will be held at the following locations and dates:

Wednesday, March 6 - Seattle

Seattle Vocational Institute, Room 401 (4th Floor), 2120 South Jackson Street, Seattle, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Monday, March 11 - Sedro Woolley

Three Rivers Inn Restaurant, 221 Central (on Hwy 20), Sedro Woolley, 5:00-8:00 P.M.

Wednesday, March 13 - Ellensburg

Central Washington University, Black Hall, 400 E. 8th Avenue, Ellensburg, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Tuesday, March 19 - Port Angeles

Peninsula College, Lecture Hall, 1502 E. Lauridsen Blvd., Port Angeles, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Wednesday, March 20 - Longview/Kelso

Lower Columbia College, Conference Rooms B&C, Student Center, 1600 Maple, Longview, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Thursday, March 21 - Olympia/Lacey

Lacey Community Center, Banquet Room C, 6729 Pacific Avenue SE, Lacey, 6:00-8:00 P.M.

Response to Comments:

A scoping report will be prepared to synthesize and summarize comments by May 31, 2002.

Responsible official: Jack Hulsey

Position/Title: Regions Operations Manager

Phone: (360) 902-1401

Address: Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington St SE, PO Box 47016, Olympia WA 98504-7016

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Jack Hulsey
2-20-02